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February 13, 2019

Dear West Babylon Staff, Faculty, Parents and Guardians:

For many years, our school district has engaged in countless efforts to enhance the safety and security of our students, staff and faculty. Throughout the last four years, we have conducted presentations regarding student mental health, school safety and security during our Board of Education meetings. These presentations are posted on our website. We have discussed the alarming prevalence of student anxiety, depression and other mental health issues that exist nationally across all demographics. As a result, we have added additional mental health professionals, enhanced our district social-emotional learning programs, increased co-curricular before- and after-school and summer programs, and increased individual and group counseling sessions. We have also established plans to further strengthen our K-12 health curriculum and, beginning next school year, will offer health courses starting at an earlier grade level.

As you are aware, we have also enhanced our safety and security measures at the building level. In all buildings, there is an increased presence of security personnel, each of whom have a law enforcement background. In addition, we have established a districtwide visitor management system, enhanced our public address system to allow for better communication, increased the number of interior and exterior cameras, established a district command center and conducted countless emergency response drills with our school resource officer and director of security. We have also authorized Suffolk County Police Department's Homeland Security to conduct building risk assessments and active shooter trainings for our staff and faculty. We are currently in the process of replacing all our doors and hardware in all buildings and, this summer, will be installing double door vestibules at each school entrance.

Our Board of Education and administrators have spent an extensive amount of time discussing these changes as well as additional options to safeguard our students, staff and faculty. During my Oct. 9, 2018 safety and security public Board of Education presentation, I was given direction by the Board to research all aspects relating to armed guards and provide such information to the Board. As noted on the Board meeting agendas, the confidential personnel aspects of security guard responsibilities have been discussed during the following Board of Education executive session meetings:

- *October 9, 2018*
- *October 23, 2018*

- *November 13, 2018*
- *November 27, 2018*
- *December 11, 2018*
- *January 8, 2019*
- *January 22, 2019*

Many discussions between the Board and administration have occurred regarding armed guards' qualifications, liability, guards' involvement in day-to-day incidents, responsibilities and locations of armed versus unarmed guards, legal duties of active law enforcement versus retired law enforcement, types of weapons, ammunition, holders and vests, as well as the associated cost of armed guards.

After months of thoughtful conversations, research, meetings with administration, conversations with our attorney, law enforcement representatives, our insurance company and other related personnel, at last night's Board meeting, the trustees voted in favor of the placement of armed security personnel beginning in the 2019-20 school year. Please know that despite the fact that extensive research was done, this was not an easy decision for our Board.

I will continue to work closely with our Board, administrators and the Suffolk County Police Department to draft policies and procedures, begin the hiring process and solidify all the confidential details.

As you know, safety and security are of utmost importance to our Board, administration team, staff, faculty and community.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Yiendhy Farrelly*  
Superintendent of Schools